

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement

From its outlet in Warm Springs Dam, Dry Creek meanders 14 miles to the Russian River. The creek is home to endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead (including steelhead raised at the Don Clausen Fish Hatchery). The creek also serves as a conduit for water that is released from Lake Sonoma by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the winter for flood control purposes and by the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) in the summer for water supply.

The Problem National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) biologists have determined that current flow levels in Dry Creek in the summer are too high for young coho and steelhead. The volume of water currently running through the creek ranges from 110 to 175 cubic feet per second (cfs), which makes it difficult for the juvenile fish to thrive.

The Solution The NMFS's biological opinion recognizes that drastically reducing the summertime flows in Dry Creek would severely impair SCWA's ability to deliver water to its customers, so the biological opinion proposes "reasonable and prudent alternatives," which include the following:

- SCWA would enhance 6 miles of habitat along Dry Creek over a 12-year period to create protected areas for juvenile coho and steelhead. If the habitat enhancement works as intended, the current water levels could continue to be released from Warm Springs Dam during the summer.
- If habitat enhancement doesn't result in significant improvements by 2020, SCWA would pursue construction of a pipeline that would carry water from the dam to the Russian River so that flow in the creek could be reduced.

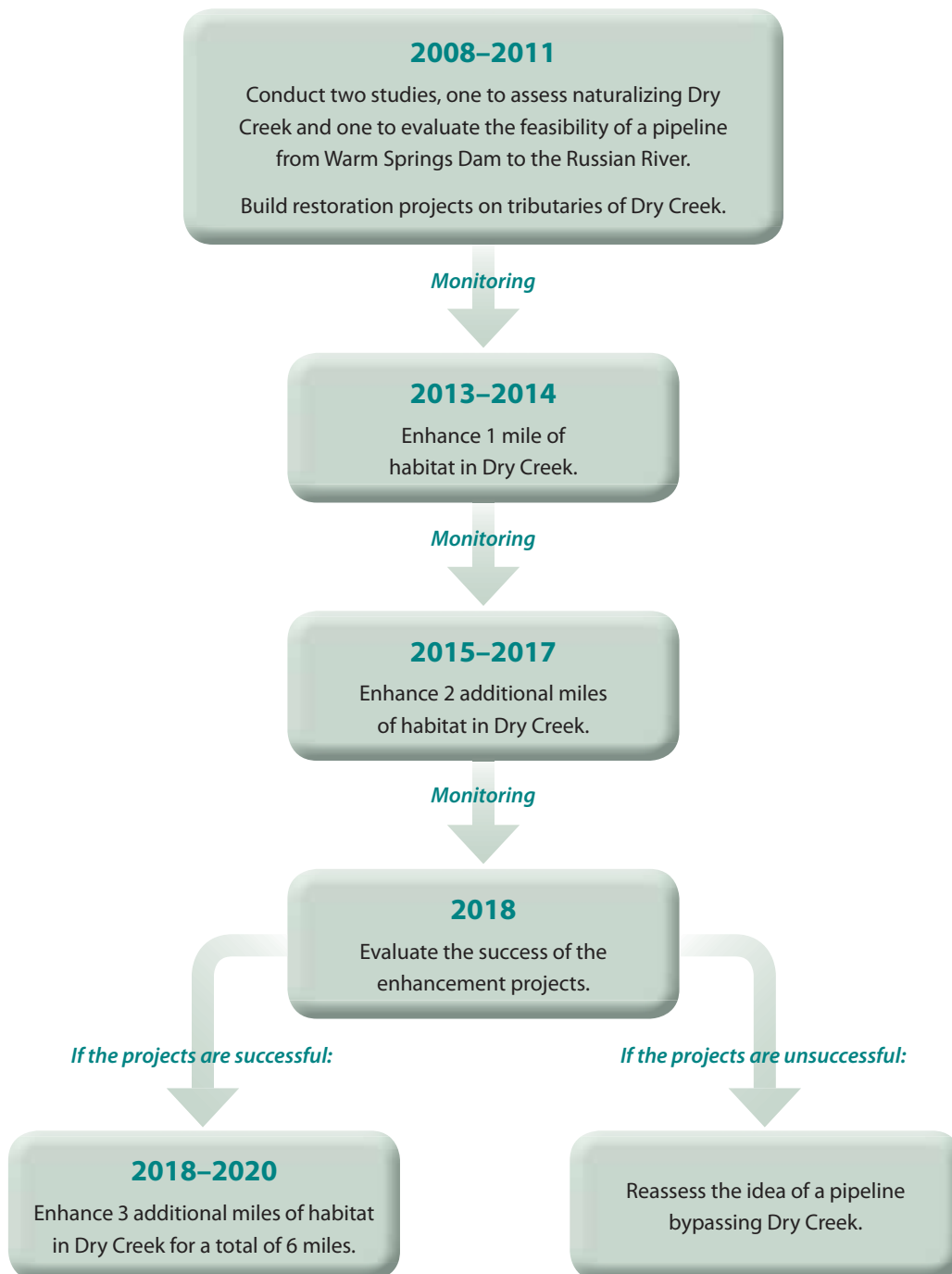
The Implementation The biological opinion proposes a schedule of studies and phased enhancement work that will include ongoing monitoring (see the reverse side for a project time line). The first step is for SCWA to conduct two feasibility studies and to pay for restoration work in Dry Creek tributaries.

One study, which will be conducted by consulting firm Inter-Fluve, Inc., will focus on habitat enhancement. This study will determine which areas of Dry Creek are candidates for habitat restoration and will evaluate the feasibility of designing enhancement projects that can accommodate high summertime flows. The Inter-Fluve study will begin in early 2009 and will be completed by 2011. Construction of the first mile of enhancement will begin in 2013.

The second study, to be conducted by engineering firm HDR, Inc., will look at the feasibility of constructing a pipeline from Warm Springs Dam to the Russian River. The study will identify potential routes and costs.

The California Department of Fish and Game, in conjunction with the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, is preparing to implement SCWA-funded projects in a number of Dry Creek tributaries—including Crane Creek, Grape Creek, Wine Creek, and Wallace Creek—that will improve fish passage and restore habitat.

Timeline of Projects Required in Dry Creek Valley



For more information visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

